

# SHAPING *Chièvres*

Story and Photos by  
Andrew Stamer

Two hours from Paris, across the border into Belgium, a slight stir can be heard in the early morning hours and continues through the day. For now, it is the sound of bulldozers, trucks, hammers, drills and the buzz of busy workers.

This is Chièvres Air Base, and big things are happening here. A future is being forged. Barracks are being built for the first time on this 80th Area Support Group installation.

"This project is one of the most unique barracks I think you'll see in Europe, or the United States," said Army Lt. Col. G. Thatch Shepard, director, Directorate of Public Works, 80th Area Support



**Air Force Master Sgt. Hyacinth Carter (right), civil engineer, 309th Airlift Squadron, discusses the new dormitories being built at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium, with Norma Renovales-Alvarez, regional program manager, BENELUX Program Office.**

Group. "We have morphed the external appearance of it to accommodate the local national landscape, culture, and still maintain the force protection requirements."

These barracks, or dormitories, are also unique because of the distinct possibility that they will be the future homes for Soldiers, as well as, Airmen, Sailors and Marines. And, taking this into account, the barracks were designed to fit this broad customer range by accommodating the other services' standards and requirements into the Army's one-plus-one format.

It may have been a daunting task to make the building fit the needs of all the different services that could find themselves living at Chièvres, but payoff for everyone may be well worth it in the end.

"In the end, I think all parties were happy with the final conclusion of the design," said Shepard.

A part of this design includes equipping all the rooms with full kitchens. The plan also calls for eight rooms for noncommissioned officers, who would be assigned to monitor various sections of the new building's tenants. Rooms are also set aside for 120 troops (E-4 and below.)

Before this project came to fruition, when there were still many things being decided, Norma Renovales-Alvarez, regional program manager, BENELUX Program Office, gave partners from all the services a chance to give their input into what would fit their troop's needs.



**▲ Roger Triviere (right), on-site safety coordinator for the contractor, shows Carol Steuart, construction representative, BENELUX Program Office, ditches where pipes will be laid alongside the road and sidewalk near the new barracks.**

**▼ These new barracks on Chièvres Air Base, Belgium will be equipped with 120 rooms to house Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines, E-4 and below, while eight rooms will be assigned to noncommissioned officers.**





# CORPS QUALITY

"I was in a lot of the planning and the first stages of it," said Air Force Master Sgt. Hyacinth Carter, civil engineer, 309th Airlift Squadron.

"The only dorms available around here are on SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) and we're a small unit on Chièvres ... our place of duty is here," said Carter.

The unit, made up of approximately 90 people, has the responsibility of flying the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

"We do get a lot of younger Airmen, and this is their first time away from home and their first time in an overseas environment, and I think ... when they have an environment like that, you kind of need to keep a little control of them," said Carter. "And that's where the dorm will come in."

The Air Force also has a fire department made up of 18 troops, and someone has to be on duty all of the time.

The dormitory will make it convenient for those troops, said Carter, because they would only be a few minutes away from work by living on base, versus the time it would take for them to come from a surrounding town and get through the gate during an emergency.

Some of the older barracks around SHAPE don't meet Air Force standards, so these younger troops have been forced to live in towns in the area surrounding Chièvres.

This dormitory will cater to the standards of all the services and will give troops the chance to build a sense of a community, by bringing them together to live on the base.

"Here they will get that sense (of community), and I think a lot of young Soldiers and Airmen need that," said Carter.

With the project moving along at a swift pace, it should take just over a year from the beginning of construction to its completion. The cost is more than \$13.5 million, and with this dorm it will spark the beginning of a community on post.

"This is going to be a win-win for the community of Chièvres, as well as those who are lucky enough to be placed in these quality barracks," said Shepard. "Ultimately, what's going to happen is this is going to begin the impetus for more development."

By turning Chièvres into an air base that can accompany full-time residents, it may lead to more development. While there is already a PX and commissary, the base may have to enlarge them to accommodate the influx of new residents. There



**Roger Triviere (right) shows Carol Steuart the progress of work that is being done on the entry ways of the barracks in Chièvres Air Base, Belgium.**

may also be a need to build a 24-hour shoppette and a community club among other things.

"It's going to jump start some future construction efforts," said Shepard.

While the barracks are scheduled to be completed by February, it is the contractor's goal to have the project delivered in early January, said Carol Steuart, construction representative, BENELUX Program Office.

And there are a couple of reasons why the team was able to project such a positive and early

completion date.

One reason was because the Corps was allowed to take over the contract by the Belgium Ministry of Defense. This made the Corps directly responsible for the project so they were able to get the ball rolling and start construction, said Renovales-Alvarez.

Safety is another reason.

"There haven't been any problems in terms of safety. The project is going well. It's a good success story because there haven't been any major delays," said Renovales-Alvarez.

"Their whole attitude or concept of construction is that they are very high on their quality," said Steuart.

From her previous experience working with the contractor, Lixon, with the SHAPE elementary school addition, the data building and the switch building, Steuart has seen the pride the Belgians take with their construction.

"They're really proud people, so you get a better product when you've got proud folks," said Steuart.

The Belgians believe in teamwork.

"It's not just what I've done; the Belgians have the designer, the contractor and the government. And from these three things they all work together as a team," said Steuart.

Because any design flaws may lead to the building having big problems later on, the responsibility for the building lies on the shoulders of the designer. And the designer works closely with all parties to make sure everything is working properly. What the contractor gains is building the best product there is for his company.

And the government, in this case the Corps, always wants a quality product to pass along to its customer, said Steuart.

"When you put these three together in Belgium, it works," said Steuart. "It's been a great team. The contractor, the Corps, the district, everybody has been right there and that's what gives you a great product in the end."



**Army Lt. Col. G. Thatch Shepard (top, right), director, Directorate of Public Works, 80th Area Support Group, leads a group of officers and noncommissioned officers from the Army and Air Force on a tour of the dormitories their troops will live in.**

While the inside of the new barracks at Chièvres Air Base, Belgium were being completed, the outside was being completed as well. Working as a team, this contractor, with brick and mortar, was able to help deliver a product that everyone would be happy with. This new barracks is the first of its kind because it was designed to house troops from the Navy, Air Force and the Army. Its estimated cost is approximately \$13.6 million.

